

Communism in Africa

October 18, 1979



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C.

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Following is a statement by Under Secretary for Political Affairs David D. Newsom before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on October 18, 1979.

When we speak of Communism in Africa, we are speaking almost exclusively of the role of the Soviet Union, the Eastern European countries under Soviet domination, Cuba, and, to a much lesser extent, China.

A few African governments—Mozambique, Angola, Benin, Congo, Ethiopia—describe their policies or ruling parties as Marxist-Leninist or scientific Socialist, but their policies are mixed and do not follow any rigid Soviet model. Even in Ethiopia there is evidence of a resistance on the part of the leadership to the total adoption of the Marxist-Leninist pattern of internal policies and organization.

I do not wish to enter into the argument over whether the military and civilian personnel from the Communist states are in Africa according to a long-term design or simply through exploiting opportunities. It makes relatively little difference whether they created the opportunities or took advantage of them. The fact is that such personnel are in Africa and they are

there in relatively large numbers. Whatever the origin of their presence, that presence represents a threat to our interests and, in our view, to the long-term interests of the African states as well.

We believe these interests are affected particularly by the presence of substantial organized military forces, particularly from Cuba, and by the extensive flow of weaponry from Communist countries to Africa.

In both global and African terms, the highest priority must be given to a peaceful resolution of the tragic and complicated problems of southern Africa. The Communist states have not lent support to fair and peaceful solutions. They have advocated military options rather than urging all parties to pay the political price of peaceful settlements.

At a time when the African countries continue to struggle under the burden of enormous economic problems, the Communist presence and the military hardware represent an economic and financial burden that diverts resources from constructive development.

The obligations incurred for the Communist nations' support can and do include facilities and rights to the naval

forces of the Soviet Union—a clear and unwarranted extension of global competition to Africa.

While even those African states which have a substantial Communist military presence have sought to maintain their essential independence, we cannot discount the effect of the financial and political debts they must repay to the Communist world for this political and military support on their long-term outlook and international orientation.

It is well to keep in mind, as we consider how to meet this problem, that the Communist countries claim that:

- Their personnel are there at the invitation of recognized sovereign African states;
- They are there in support of liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU);
- They are there to protect weaker black African states from the military power of South Africa or from outside aggression.

Neither the states directly involved nor the Organization of African Unity challenge these assumptions—just as the OAU has never challenged the right of African states to call on the help of other non-African states to meet problems of defense or internal security and development.

To say that there has been no formal challenge, however, does not mean that African states, including some of those in which Communist bloc military personnel are present, are reconciled to these situations or wish to see them prolonged. African states have long made it clear that, while they recognize the right of governments to call on outside help, they would much prefer that African problems be resolved without outside intervention. The heritage of the colonial period has left a strong distaste for the influence and presence of non-African powers, whether Communist or non-Communist.

Whatever may be their private views, African states—including the more conservative ones—have publicly resisted actions and policies which appear to make African conflicts part of the larger East-West confrontation. Most have preferred that the Western response to the presence of Communist personnel in Africa be through approaching the African problems which provided the original rationale rather than through global strategic moves.

Let me now turn to discuss where the Communist personnel and assistance are found in Africa, where their influence has been reduced, and, finally, to the policies of the United States with respect to this presence.

Countries Given Communist Assistance

It is my understanding that the focus of the committee's attention is on sub-Saharan Africa. I will, therefore, concentrate on that area. I would note that there are Soviet and other Eastern European and possibly Cuban military technicians in Algeria and Libya, but there are no

organized Communist troop units in this portion of Africa. There is some Communist equipment provided by Algeria and possibly Libya to the Polisario in the Sahara.

Communist military personnel numbered in 1978, by our best estimate, approximately 41,000 in sub-Saharan Africa. Of these, an estimated 3,800 were from Eastern Europe, probably about half Soviets and the bulk of the remainder from East Germany. The largest concentrations were in Angola and Ethiopia, and the major groups were Cubans who numbered approximately 37,000, including 19,000 in Angola and 16,500 in Ethiopia.

The next largest concentration, after these two countries, was in Mozambique, where there were an estimated 1,130 personnel from all Communist countries. Other countries where there were Communist military personnel included Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. Some of the Soviet, East German, and Cuban personnel in Zambia are assigned to help the Zimbabwe African People's Union,

Communist Military Personnel in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1978¹

Country	TOTAL	U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe ²	Cuba ³	China
Angola	20,300	1,300	19,000	—
Equatorial Guinea	290	40	150	100
Ethiopia	17,900	1,400	16,500	—
Guinea	330	100	200	30
Guinea-Bissau	205	65	140	—
Mali	195	180	—	15
Mozambique	1,130	230	800	100
Other	1,330	500	485	345
TOTAL	41,680	3,815	37,275	590

¹ Number of persons present for a period of 1 month or more during 1978. Rounded to the nearest 5.

² Mainly Soviets. Among Eastern Europeans, most are believed to be East Germans.

³ Includes troops.

Joshua Nkomo's Rhodesian liberation movement.

While there has been some reduction in personnel in Equatorial Guinea and Guinea since these estimates, and probably some reduction in Cuban forces in Ethiopia, we believe that the overall total on the continent is substantially the same now.

Communist country technical experts in Africa in 1978 were estimated at 37,000, of whom about 7,500 were Soviets or East Germans. Approximately 18,000 were Cubans and 11,000, Chinese. They were present in at least 23 countries; the largest concentration was in Angola where about 10,000 were present, mostly Cubans. The same countries which had concentrations of military personnel also had civilian technicians. The only other important concentration of Soviet civilian technicians is in Nigeria where there are about 1,600. The largest concentrations of Chinese technicians are in Somalia and Zambia—3,000 in the former; 5,000 in the latter. I can provide the subcommittee, for the record, a complete breakdown of these estimates [see tables].

It will be noted that, with the exception of Ethiopia, the largest concentration of Communist military personnel is in those former Portuguese territories where the successful liberation movements received strong preindependence Soviet support. With the departure of the Portuguese, these leaders, particularly in Angola, turned to the Soviets and their Cuban and East German allies for the military help required to secure power and for the civilian help required to replace the Portuguese.

In Ethiopia, a leftist revolution turned to the Soviets and the Cubans for military and civilian help, emphasizing to Africa and to the world, as a rationale for their intervention, the threat posed by the Somali military activities in the Ogaden region.

Communist Economic Technicians in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1978¹

Country	TOTAL	U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe ²	Cuba	China
Angola	9,910	1,400	8,500	10
Ethiopia	1,400	650	500	250
Gabon	75	10	—	65
Gambia	75	—	—	75
Ghana	175	95	—	80
Guinea	1,035	700	35	300
Guinea-Bissau	405	265	85	55
Kenya	30	25	—	5
Liberia	210	10	—	200
Madagascar	200	—	—	200
Mali	1,025	475	—	550
Mauritius	15	—	—	15
Mozambique	1,270	750	400	120
Niger	160	10	—	150
Nigeria	1,750	1,625	—	125
Rwanda	60	10	—	50
Sao Tome and Principe	260	20	140	100
Senegal	500	100	—	400
Sierra Leone	310	10	—	300
Somalia	3,050	50	—	3,000
Sudan	775	125	—	650
Tanzania	1,365	165	200	1,000
Zambia	5,645	125	20	5,500
Others	7,525	1,020	1,090	5,415
TOTAL	37,225	7,640	18,615	10,970

¹ Number of persons present for a period of 1 month or more during 1978. Rounded to the nearest 5.

² More than half are Soviets, nearly 1,000 are believed to be East Germans.

As I have noted, the bulk of the manpower has been supplied by Cuba. The Soviet Union has supplied the equipment and, undoubtedly, much of the financing. The East Germans supplement these contributions with technical skills and sophisticated equipment.

The Communist Approach

Soviet and Cuban objectives in Africa are harmonious, but not necessarily synonymous. Cuba sent technicians to Africa before the more dramatic cooperation with the Soviets which we have witnessed in the last few years. Castro, emphasizing the African element in the

Cuban population, sees a special mission for Cuba in that continent.

Soviet motivations are probably a mixture of geopolitical, strategic, and ideological. The Soviet approach continues to be one of seizing opportunities as they arise and of relying heavily on military rather than economic assistance to gain their objectives.

East Germany is a relative newcomer to the African scene. Until 1973 its actions in Africa were predominantly aimed at gaining international legitimacy and diplomatic recognition. Once this was

achieved, its African priorities became more focused on support for Soviet aims, spreading of Marxist-Leninist ideology, securing markets and long-term supplies of materials and competing against the Federal Republic.

The Soviets probably attach the greatest importance to their help to Ethiopia. They continue to supply arms, training, construction services, and advice to the Ethiopian forces. Cuban combat forces continue to help protect Ethiopian frontiers in the Ogaden and probably provide some logistical and other support for the Ethiopian campaigns in Eritrea.

Despite the close ties there are undoubtedly problems in the Moscow-Addis Ababa relationship. The Ethiopian inability to win a military success this past summer in their campaign against the Eritreans, despite massive Soviet support, was a disappointment to both and did nothing to promote mutual confidence in either's ability to achieve a military solution. Soviet economic assistance to the Mengistu regime has been relatively modest. Ethiopian failure to move quickly in the formation of a civilian Marxist party to replace the military regime must give pause to the more dogmatic Marxist-Leninists who support the Ethiopian Revolution.

In Angola, the Soviets and Cubans continue to provide support for combat operations against the rival liberation movement of UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]. The East Germans also provide advisers, though they have vehemently denied reports that they have provided troops as well. So, too, do Soviet and Cuban personnel provide significant support to the Mozambican military. So far these have been advisers rather than combatants. In the Rhodesian conflict, the Soviets, along with the East Germans, continue to provide military assistance almost exclusively to ZAPU [Zimbabwe African People's Union] rather than the Patriotic Front as a whole. The Cubans, on the

other hand, along with the Ethiopians, are providing training to both ZAPU and ZANU [Zimbabwe African National Union].

Through their activities in Africa, the Soviets have had fairly regular naval access to repair facilities in Ethiopia and Angola. Soviet ships also call in Mozambique and a small West African patrol "shows the flag" using ports such as Conakry and Cotonou, as well as Luanda. A number of other countries have resisted Soviet attempts for naval access.

Reduction of Soviet Influence

The publicity afforded Soviet activities in Africa and the fact that Moscow is the dominant foreign influence in a few areas, like Ethiopia, gives the impression that Soviet policy in Africa is an across-the-board success. Such is not the case.

The Soviet's position over the years has been reduced in places like Ghana, Guinea, the Sudan, Somalia, and Egypt. And even some of the states where the Soviets retain considerable influence have indicated a desire to strengthen ties with the West.

Recently we have seen the ouster of two more Soviet clients—Idi Amin in Uganda and Macias in Equatorial Guinea. Both of those regimes, well recognized as two of the grossest violators of human rights, received considerable support from the Soviet Union and its allies, including military hardware and training. The indiscriminate supply of weapons and training by the Communist nations to insecure and repressive regimes has sustained them and contributed to some of the most grisly crimes against human dignity ever perpetrated on the African or any continent.

Chinese Influence

The committee has also expressed an interest in the question of Chinese influence and activities. I have referred above to Chinese technicians in Zambia and Somalia. There are approximately 500 Chinese military technicians scattered through the continent and in excess of 10,000 civilian technicians.

Despite this presence and their major effort in Africa in the 1960's, they are of relatively minor significance today, Chinese policy is aimed primarily at parrying the Soviet advances. Their efforts have been largely in the propaganda field. The Chinese continue modest aid programs and their military assistance has been limited to supplying light weapons and some training. They are one of the primary suppliers to Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union.

The U.S. Response

Our own response to the Communist presence in Africa is based on the premise that African nations will fundamentally seek international alignments which will further Africa's own central priorities. These priorities are:

- Self-determination—an end to racial discrimination and white minority rule;
- The maintenance of territorial integrity;
- Progress in economic development.

A minority of the countries in Africa have felt that they have found support for these priorities in close ties with the Communist countries. The reasons are partly historic, stemming from our own past policies with respect to the Portuguese territories and our identification with the former colonial powers and with South Africa.

But Africa is a continent of moving, not still, pictures. Permanent characterizations are risky. As I have already demonstrated, a number of countries have found that, in the long run, their interests lie in rejecting an exclusive dependence on the Communist countries. Nationalism is a powerful force in Africa, and no African leaders or peoples wish to come under the lasting influence of any foreign power.

I should note that the African states have been particularly helpful at the United Nations and in U.N. agencies, especially with regard to attempts by certain states to take action against their fellow OAU member, Egypt, for its role in the Middle East peace process.

In support of our own long-term interests on the Continent of Africa and in recognition of the forces of African nationalism, this Administration has pursued and continues to pursue positive regional policies that respond to local realities and that avoid East-West confrontations. We consider as essential elements of this approach:

First, promotion of our economic, cultural, and social ties with the African Continent. We continue to build on the strength of relationships which have grown over the years, addressing through trade, investment, and technical assistance the genuine needs of African nations and, in so doing, promoting both our own well-being and strengthening the independence of African states. Such a long-term commitment, we believe, is perhaps the strongest approach to the deterrent of Communist influence.

Second, we shall continue to seek the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes in Africa, as elsewhere, through strengthening the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. A resort to violence to solve disputes almost inevitably entails human suffering and a diversion of resources away from the development process. We recognize full well that peace is an indispensable prerequisite for development in its fullest sense.

Conversely, continued turmoil, conflict, and a report to arms provide opportunities for Communist exploitation. This Administration has, therefore, placed a high priority on the search for peaceful conflict resolution in Africa, and we shall continue to do so.

Third, we shall continue to consider security requests from African nations with legitimate defense needs. While recognizing that we cannot and should not downplay African security concerns, any increase in our military assistance will be prudent. We have not attempted to compete with Communist nations in an indiscriminate arms race in Africa, for to do so would have been contrary to our own arms control restraints and counter-productive with respect to our other policy objectives.

Fourth, in Africa as elsewhere, this Administration has sought to foster respect for individual human rights. We have pursued this objective both because it is inherently right to do so and because we believe it to be a vital component in the peaceful development of the continent.

Fifth, a continued respect for African nationalism which we believe to be a positive force in Africa's political, social, economic, and cultural development and in sustaining the ability of African nations to retain and strengthen their independence from outside powers.

Our reaction to the Communist presence, therefore, has been a part of a broader African policy designed to support:

- The resolution of those African problems which threaten the peace and provide the opportunities for Communist exploitation;
- The constructive participation of African nations in international fora;
- The peaceful economic development of these nations.

To this end we have sought to maintain a dialogue even with those countries where there is a substantial Communist presence. In most instances, this is reciprocated by the African nations. Angola, for example, has cooperated closely with the U.N. plans for settlement in Namibia, as Mozambique has cooperated with us in the search for peace in Rhodesia.

In this dialogue, it is clear that we will take no steps which would suggest an endorsement or acceptance of their willingness to accept and maintain Communist troop presences in their territories. In such cases as Ethiopia, too, our dialogue is necessarily restricted by their failure to take actions required by our legislation.

The Soviet Union is not well equipped to contribute importantly to economic development, the fundamental long-term goal of Africa. The Soviets do not provide a market for most African goods; they are not part of the world economic system, not members of the IMF [International Monetary Fund]; they have no multilateral companies to spread technology; their ruble is not convertible. We prefer not to compete in the field of arms deliveries, where the Soviets are efficient and without scruples. While we provide military equipment within limits, we prefer to compete where we have comparative advantage—in the support for economic and social development.

This approach, I might add, depends heavily upon the willingness of Congress to provide adequate foreign aid resources.

The states of sub-Saharan Africa still look to us as the primary peacemaker. They still find in us ideals they would like to apply to their societies. They still find in the Western nations their best hope in their quest for development. The West remains their main trading partners.

Our African policy is on a firm footing which in the long run will serve both our

own interests and those of Africa. Rather than contributing to conflict, we are attempting to foster peaceful solutions. Rather than treating the symptoms of unrest and turmoil, we are attempting to deal with the root causes. We rely on our trade, aid, and economic ties and on an open dialogue based on mutual respect. Our assistance is designed to meet the

pressing needs of economic development and to help countries meet their legitimate self-defense needs.

On balance, I believe that these policies have resulted in our being in a stronger position vis-a-vis the African Continent than the Soviets and other Communist

states have achieved with their MIGs and Kalashnikov-bearing troops.

Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication
Editorial Division

October 1979

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